



PRESS RELEASE

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Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Richard Stengel Discusses Bilateral Relationship, Press Freedom, and Education and Exchange Programs

Yangon – Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs [Richard Stengel](#) visited April 28-29 where he met with senior Union Government officials in Naypyitaw, including Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister of Information Aung Kyi, and Minister of Culture Aye Myint Kyu, to discuss the bilateral relationship, press freedom, and cultural exchanges. Under Secretary Stengel spoke with journalists about steps they can take to ensure a responsible media environment, and with civil society representatives, students, and entrepreneurs about ways that U.S. government education and exchange programs can support the country's ongoing reforms.

“It’s an honor be here, my first trip as Under Secretary, to demonstrate U.S. commitment to strengthening ongoing reforms,” said Stengel. “I came to this country on my first official trip overseas, not just because of the unprecedented reforms this country is undertaking, but because we believe that partnering with the Union Government to invest in the people – through targeted education and exchange programs – will pay dividends. The young people, civil society leaders, and journalists I’ve met confirmed that these types of programs create strong people-to-people ties between our two countries that can sustain and deepen our relationship.

“In advance of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, I met with local journalists to discuss the current media environment and the importance of freedom of expression. The political space has opened significantly in the last three years, and the government has taken important steps to cultivate an environment conducive to free, fair and independent media, a critical element of a vibrant democracy. However, in the past few months, the United States has watched with concern the arrest and sentencing of journalists trying to cover stories. These arrests raise questions about the extent of the government’s commitment to freedom of the press. In my discussions, I encouraged the government and local media to work together to create an environment where access to good, accurate information is guaranteed and where journalists serve to elevate the public discourse.”

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